



Local governments working together for a better metropolitan region

COPY

May 11, 2005

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Honorable Stephen Brayman
Mayor
College Park City Council
7604 Sweetbriar Dr
College Park, MD 20740-3032

Re: Education and outreach efforts for achieving water quality goals

Dear Mayor Brayman:

I am writing to you as chair of the Chesapeake Bay Policy Committee (CBPC) of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments to alert you to several current regional opportunities for conducting outreach and education efforts for stormwater management.

As I'm sure you know, the local governments in the COG region are subject to regulations for reducing pollution from urban stormwater runoff. These regulations include requirements for educating citizens about the need for stormwater management and actions they can take to minimize pollution. Although the region's local governments all pursue their own individual outreach programs, there are currently two major initiatives that have pooled funds to conduct campaigns using regional mass media.

The enclosed attachment provides details on these initiatives as well as on some of the more innovative outreach efforts at the individual jurisdictional level. The members of the CBPC directed its preparation as a way to encourage you to consider further regional efforts in the future.

For more information or to discuss opportunities for regional collaboration, please contact Ted Graham, COG's Director of Water Resources, at 202-962-3352.

Sincerely,

John R. Lovell Jr.
Chair, Chesapeake Bay Policy Committee
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
Member, Frederick County Board of Commissioners

cc: Chesapeake Bay Policy Committee Members

Fact Sheet on Stormwater Education and Outreach Efforts In the Washington Metropolitan Region

COG staff document
May 2, 2005

Regulatory requirements

Most of COG's member jurisdictions are subject to the terms and conditions of municipal stormwater discharge permits, known as MS4 permits for the federal permitting rules to which the governments are subject. In most cases, they are specifically required to conduct education and outreach efforts on water quality as part of their permit conditions. In addition to the MS4 outreach requirements, some local governments in the region have specific education responsibilities as part of "Total Maximum Daily Load" (TMDL) agreements to restore certain watersheds, such as Four Mile Run in northern Virginia.

Current program details

Currently, local governments engage in a range of such activities to fulfill their education and outreach requirements. These include common items such as maintaining an up-to-date web site, distributing brochures, staffing booth displays at local events, sponsoring landscape tours, organizing stream clean-up and tree planting efforts, providing presentations to school and community groups, and sponsoring adopt-a-stream programs. Among the more innovative programs are:

- Publication of weekly newspaper columns
- Development of environmental stewardship workshop for owners of large properties
- Sponsorship of television programs for local government access channels
- Sponsorship of print ads on Metro and in local movie theaters

Current program costs

COG staff does not have figures for every local government in the region. Two of the highest-funded outreach programs are thought to be in Montgomery -- which spends about \$312,000 a year -- and Prince William -- which spends about \$200,000 a year. COG staff estimates that COG's 18 members collectively spend about \$1 million a year on stormwater education and outreach efforts.

Current regional initiatives

Although a number of local governments have sponsored local radio or print ads, few, if any, have undertaken more regional media efforts. A major factor is undoubtedly cost, as even a modest ad campaign can cost more than a single jurisdiction spends on all of its education and outreach efforts in a year. In that regard, two current regional initiatives are worth noting. Both are pooling funds from various jurisdictions to spread the costs over a broader base while taking advantage of the multi-jurisdictional reach of local media.

- Using about \$600,000 in funds from the federal government, the state of Virginia and the District of Columbia, the Chesapeake Bay Program has sponsored a media advertising campaign in the Washington metropolitan region this spring to encourage the public to adopt lawn care practices that will minimize the potential for fertilizer runoff to occur. This “Chesapeake Club” campaign includes 30- and 15-second television commercials, print advertisements in local newspapers and posters on Metro and other locations. Several local governments have coordinated some of their stormwater outreach efforts with this Bay Program campaign.

Information contact: Chris Conner, Director of Communications for the Chesapeake Bay Program; phone, 410-267-5758; email, CConner@chesapeakebay.net

- Through the combined contributions of most of its local government members, the Northern Virginia Regional Commission will coordinate an advertising campaign in June and July on eight local radio stations. The campaign will promote several actions citizens can take to minimize their impact on local water quality, including the careful use of lawn fertilizers. Funding for this effort is expected to total about \$100,000.

Information contact: Katherine Mull, Senior Environmental Planner for the Northern Virginia Regional Commission; phone, 703-642-4625; email, kmull@novaregion.org

Opportunity for future regional efforts

Currently, neither of the two regional outreach efforts has any committed funds beyond the current year. The outlook for further state and federal contributions to the Bay Program’s campaign is unlikely, according to Bay Program staff.

A source of funds for outreach efforts was identified by the Chesapeake Bay Blue Ribbon Watershed Finance Panel. In its recent report detailing a set of proposals for enhancing the current level of funding for Bay restoration work, the Panel recommended that the states in the region impose a surcharge on the sale of fertilizer to home owners. The estimated revenue from this measure, about \$6 million annually, could be used to fund efforts to educate the public on how to minimize the potential for fertilizer runoff, according to the Panel. However, state or federal legislation would be required to impose such a surcharge.

COG staff contact: Karl Berger, Senior Environmental Planner; phone, 202-962-3350; email, kberger@mwkog.org